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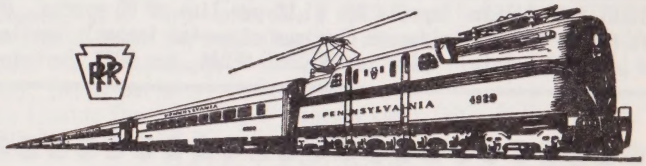

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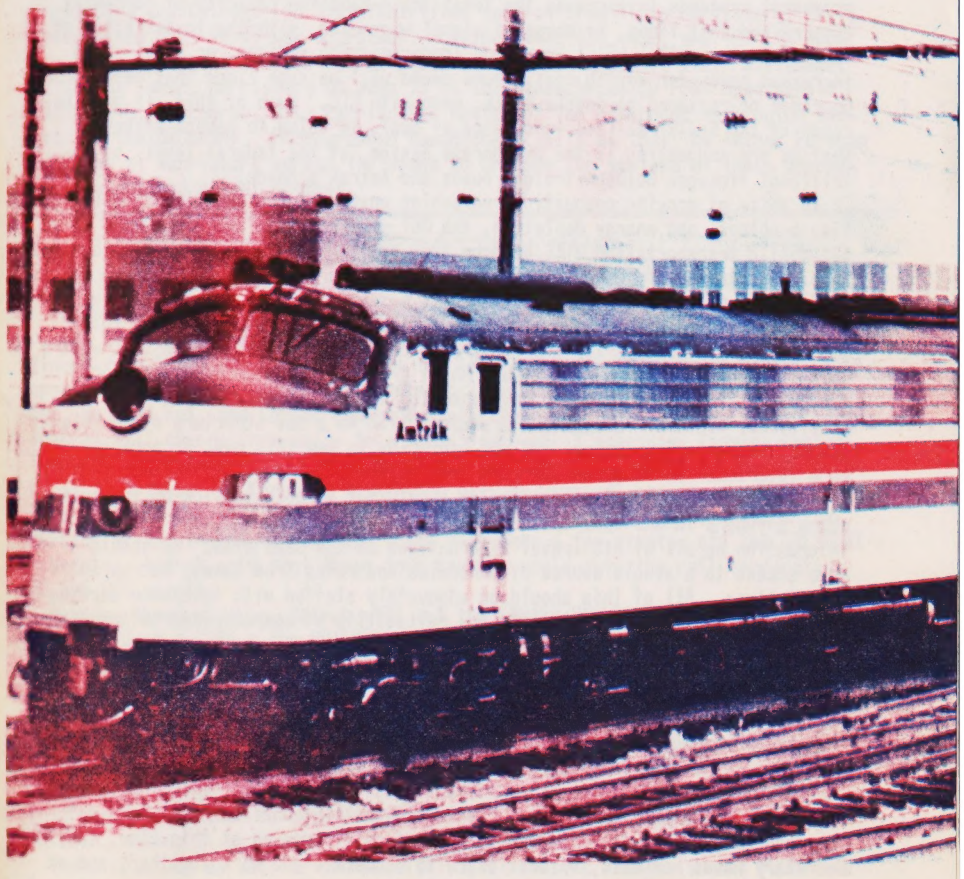
VOL. 7 NO. 14
SECOND ISSUE OF
JULY 1977
#158



Readers Rate the Trains

AMTRAK PRESIDENT PAUL REISTRUP'S STATEMENT BEFORE THE NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION POLICY STUDY COMMISSION, JULY 1--A Condensed Version

This country and the world are awakening to an era in which energy concerns and transportation concerns are merging. Together they have become the most important topics of our generation. President Carter's recent energy program means that the railroad industry will be called upon to serve the nation in petroleum conservation.

We have energy and we have transportation, but we don't have them to waste. What we need now is to learn how best to use them, and one of the first steps must be the achievement of a cooperative transportation system. From Amtrak's point of view, one important element that must be addressed at a high policy level is the development of federal programs that foster Amtrak-railroad cooperation. This may involve the creation of funding mechanisms for capital improvement projects to increase the total train-handling capacity of currently constrained rail lines, by means of signal upgrading, with the installation of central train control (CTC), more and longer passing sidings, or both. With increased needs for moving coal, there could well be some lines that need to be upgraded or restored to double track, even with CTC. Much of this, if only because of the newly realized importance of coal, is going to happen anyway. What we are suggesting is the deliberate design, at the federal level, of intelligent linkages between freight needs and Amtrak's needs.

In spite of growing congestion, worsening environmental conditions, pollution problems, and energy depletion, the DOT predicts that the gross cost of automobile transportation will go from $260 billion in 1975 to $449 billion in 1990. The number of automobiles will increase from just over 100 million in 1975 to 135 million in 1990, and intercity passenger travel is expected to double during the same period. Those DOT figures are derived from the real world, but President Carter's program demands a change. We believe that we are going to see a much more significant shift from almost total dependence upon the automobile to a multimodal environment. We are going to evolve from the traditional world of independent transportation to a new structure of an integrated transportation system. We are beginning to see this now, as more and more intermodal exchange points come into being.

There is no reason why the traveler should not be able to pick up the telephone anywhere in the U.S. and with a single call get accurate and reliable information on all of his travel alternatives at the same time. He should have access to a single source of schedules and rates from buses, Amtrak and the airlines. All of this should be adequately staffed with telephone service and backed up with the flexibility and reliability of computerized information systems.

The traveler should be able to get thru-ticketing and thru-baggage-checking from the origin point, whether it be bus depot, airport or railroad station. There is no reason why such a single call should not also include lodging, rental-car reservations, or pickup by taxi, van or limousine at the front door or office and delivery to the desired destination, whether hundreds or thousands of miles away.

We could do all of this today. It is the institutional barriers, and not the technology, that stand in the way of such efficiencies at this time. As Secretary Adams has said, we must learn to cooperate and work together, and we must end the "free-for-all."

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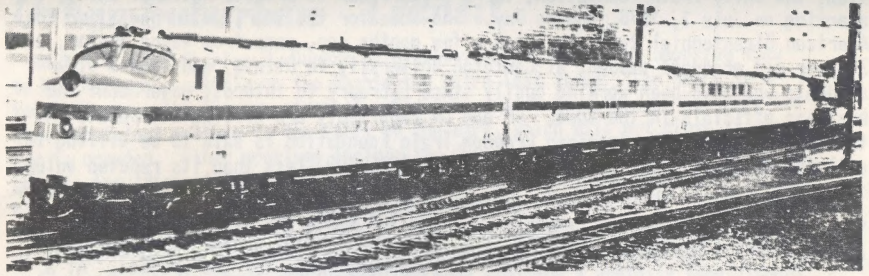
THE COVER STORY



On the 75th anniversary of the BROADWAY LIMITED, June 15 (see First June issue), Amtrak brought out four matching E units to power the anniversary train between Harrisburg and Chicago (in the electrified section from NY to Harrisburg, newly refurbished GG-1 #4935 was operated). Engines 440, 470, 452, and 428 (in ABBA arrangement), painted up in Amtrak's new striped design await their assignment at Harris Tower, Harrisburg on June 15 in this Kodachrome by Fred Abendschein. Engine 440, of course, also carries the number of the eastbound Washington section of the BROADWAY. Photographer Abendschein tells us that the Amtrak Foreman of Power at Harrisburg worked for weeks to arrange the meeting of these appropriately matched diesel engines.

AMTRAK MAKES DESPERATE SERVICE CUTS, CALLS FOR COMMENTS ON FLORIDIAN SERVICE

Desperate to save money by budget-cutting, Amtrak announced Aug 9 that it will reduce service on four routes beginning Sept 8: (1) The CHAMPION will be discontinued from Sept 8 thru Dec 13. (2) The INTER-AMERICAN will revert to tri-weekly operation on the leg between St. Louis and Laredo; St. Louis departures will be Sun, Wed and Fri, and Laredo departures will be Sun, Tue and Fri. (3) The SAN JOAQUIN will change from daily to a four-times-weekly schedule, leaving Oakland Thur-Mon and leaving Bakersfield Fri-Mon. (4) Amtrak's portion of the SOUTHERN CRESCENT between New York and Washington will be dropped, and passengers from SR's SOUTHERN CRESCENT will make an across-the-platform change to or from the PATRIOT at Washington, a corridor train that runs a few minutes off the CRESCENT's schedule. Amtrak said that these four changes would save the rail corporation $5,555,000 yearly.

Besides these changes, Amtrak will cut the EMPIRE BUILDER to 4 times weekly starting Sept 8. Thus the BUILDER and the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA will operate on alternate days. Besides being an economy measure, the change according to Amtrak is to speed up the assignment of bilevel car consists when they are delivered next winter; with fewer Chicago-Seattle trainsets in use, more of them can be converted to bilevel initially. Amtrak will continue to run two daily trains between Chicago and Minneapolis. The schedules of the Chicago-Seattle runs are expected to change Sept 8, with faster running times probable. It is rumored that the Oct 30 schedule change might bring a flipped schedule for the EMPIRE BUILDER, making it an overnight train between Minneapolis and Chicago.

These changes, as well as the possibility of drastic changes in the FLORIDIAN (see 2nd June issue), are the result of Amtrak budget-cutting by Congress and the White House. Amtrak had wanted a $534.1 million operating budget for fiscal year 1978, which begins Oct 1. The White House persuaded Amtrak to go for a $500 million budget and economize by exercising route and service criteria. The House, however, cut Amtrak's budget by $11.5 million, to $488.5 million. It has been learned that Congressman McFall of Manteca, California was primarily responsible for that cut. It may be supposed that the cut in the SAN JOAQUIN was aimed at influencing McFall, altho the Congressman reportedly said that he did not care if the train was dropped completely. (continued on p. 17)

AMERICAN FREEDOM TRAIN cars are likely to be purchased by a Canadian organization, the Unity Train Foundation, for a 5-year tour to promote national unity, starting on July 1, 1978, Canada Day. The idea for the tour, patterned after the American Bicentennial tour completed a few months ago, came from Wayne Hunter, a 24-year old graduate student at Carleton University in Ottawa, and from 3 other students who have been working busily since February to interest government and business officials in the idea. CP and CN reportedly are willing to operate the train at no cost. The American Freedom Train Foundation is said to be willing to sell the 15-car exhibit train to Canada for $575,000--less than its reputed value.

Rail Canada

Premier William Davis of Ontario is pushing the plan, and most provinces, with the exception of Quebec, appear willing to donate funds for the project. At a Minister's Conference in Prince Edward Island Aug 17-19 the matter is to be discussed further. A 6-car Confederation Train toured Canada in 1967, during the nation's Centennial.

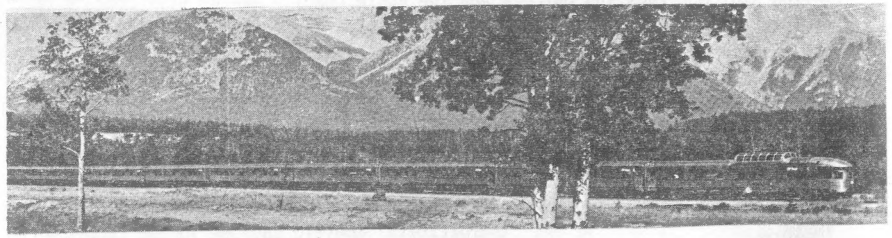
THE TORONTO STAR was highly critical of the July decision by Ontario to buy new Toronto streetcars from an Ontario firm rather than the Quebec company that submitted the lowest tender. The Star suggested that Canada as a whole loses--that suspicions by the French are increased; and that economic Balkanization of the Dominion is encouraged. An Ontario official said the move was to help the high unemployment rate in the Province.

A STUDY MADE by the Canadian Institute for Guided Ground Transport for Transport Canada argues that electrification of Canadian rail lines should be pursued in order to save fuel. The report recommends building a 400-mile trial electric line in one of two possible locations: Thunder Bay-Winnipeg or Edmonton-Kamloops. Government financial assistance would be needed for extensive electrification, and 9500 miles of track ought to be so adapted in the next 30 years, according to the new study.

VIA RAIL CANADA officials are said to be casting envious glances at the large numbers of CP Rail CANADIAN stainless steel cars now out of service (and some cannibalized) for use in re-equipping the Maritime trains Montreal-Halifax.

PLANNING RAIL TRAVEL across Canada next summer--or a visit to Edmonton's new rapid transit line? If so, be advised that the Commonwealth Games being held in Edmonton Aug 3-12, 1978 will cause rail bookings to swell on the transcon and Calgary-South Edmonton routes. Bookings far in advance are advised.

THE SUPER CONTINENTAL train of CN was halted by a 15-car freight derailment Aug 4 on the Cisco Bridge 104 miles west of Kamloops B.C. Some wooden parts of the bridge were afire, resisting firefighters' efforts. About 1000 rail passengers were stranded by the wreck, and CN flew them in chartered jets.



THE ABOVE PHOTO of CP Rail's domeliner CANADIAN appears in its new color brochure "'The Canadian' Experience."

CANADA'S AIR TRANSPORT system was near paralysis as air traffic controllers began a nationwide strike Aug 7. Bus and rail couldn't help much in the middle of the summer season, but CN said it "shoe-horned" 75 extra people aboard the SUPER CONTINENTAL eastbound at Winnipeg, by using every possible space and adding an extra coach. Calgary had 80 people on the CANADIAN's wait list.

page 4

Urban-Suburban Transit

AN RTN READER, Charles H. Dunbar of Hyattsville MD, writes an opposing view to Ken Maylath's article on the Washington Metro last issue: "The Metro is a total fiasco. The 'horror stories' would take a book to catalog. Probably the most persistent problem is the doors on the cars, which will not close if the car is crowded. Other problems include too few trains to handle rush hour crowds, insufficient farecard machines and gates, inoperative escalators and escalators which stop suddenly and without warning, pitching their riders headlong. Frequently riders are unable to exit from stations because the machines at the exit gates are inoperative, with the result that there are unpleasant and potentially dangerous mob scenes. At many stations a woefully insufficnent number of entrance and exit turnstiles have been installed. Metro riders are fed up with waiting for trains which never show up. They are tired of being told that some of them must evacuate a train because it is overloaded and the doors will not close. They are tired of missed dinners, missed bus and commuter train connections, and tired of being chewed out by the boss for being late to work because 'the Metro broke down again.'" Mr. Dunbar would like to offer a constructive solution, but can think of none.

THE CHICAGO-VALPARAISO commuter trains run by ConRail may have fare increases coming Sept 1--rises of 15-30%. At the request of the Public Service Commission of Indiana, ConRail filed for them on Jul 29. The last fare increase was in Feb 1975. About 725 passengers daily (each way) make use of the service on the 44-mile rail route.

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION of California on Aug 1 began 2 weeks of hearings on the SP's plea to abandon its San Francisco commute service. The railroad is opposed to any public subsidy for the line. The PUC reported the SP's overall profits as $67 million for the first half of this year.

THE SIERRA CLUB, San Francisco Bay Chapter, is opposing a transit finance bill now being considered by the state, because it gives the non-elected Metropolitan Transportation Commission too much power over BART, AC Transit and the S.F. Muni, and because it divides sales tax funds up among these agencies, cutting the percentage that BART would receive, threatening BART to raise fares.

WILLIAM C. SIBERT, a grant application reviewer with UMTA, was arrested Aug 5 and charged with embezzling the federal transit agency of at least $800,000 since last May.

THE PA ENGINES of the D&H will be going to Boston this fall to pull commuter trains on the B&M/South. The MBTA says it can't make it thru the winter without two of the engines due to the poor condition of most MBTA units. The D&H will also lease two RS engines to the transit agency.

BIDS WENT OUT Aug 1 for 5 new diesels for Boston's MBTA, and only EMD responded--with a bid for $768,700 each for new F40PH locomotives, higher than the $540,000 the MBTA had expected to pay.

OLD STREETCAR TRACKS are being paved over in the Georgetown section of Washington DC, despite the opposition of residents, who would like to see streetcars restored, to link up with the Metro system. Officials said the paving can be easily removed in the event that light rail makes a comeback there.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY of Chicago announced this month that commuter service will be augmented on the BN (2 more trains) and the Milwaukee Road (4 trains) effective Sept 4, during rush hours.

CHICAGO TRANSIT AUTHORITY has fired two motormen--the one involved in the fatal Feb 4 crash and the work train motorman in the July 17 smashup.

TRANSIT BRIEFS: The Rock Island will lease a FIAT rail diesel car for a 3-month test on its Beverly commuter division..... Most of San Francisco's 340-odd electric trolley coaches retired last year have been purchased by Mexico City..... City of Calgary will buy 27 new DuWag (West German) articulated streetcars for its proposed 10-mile light-rail transit line.....

page 5

PUTTING AMTRAK'S HOUSE IN ORDER
by Dr. Dan Monaghan

Amtrak is running over its budget for FY 1977 and starting to cry for more funds or for service cutbacks. This is unnecessary and uncalled for. If Amtrak had a handle on things as they should, this could be prevented. There is obviously no lack of market for the services that Amtrak has to sell. It is amazing how people keep coming back for more even after being slapped in the face with examples of Amtrak's mismanagement.

The core of the problem is equipment, and primarily cars that will not cool properly. It has been pointed out time and again that Amtrak's maintenance forces cannot cope with cars of obsolete mechanical and electrical design that, to make matters worse, are shuffled around over the system like freight cars so that nobody recognizes their infirmities or can fix them. A massive program of conversion to head-end power and standardization should have been started long ago and been well along by now. The success of such a program on the Ringling Bros. circus train was pointed out many months ago. As it is, only the program for converting the 25 "Pacific" series sleepers is in progress.

As a result, plus the fact that Amtrak seems unable to pull its organization together and run a tight ship, revenues are well below the level that they should be, knowing the public demand that exists for rail travel. Instead of having a well-structured chain of command with responsibility that goes rapidly and directly to the top, the authority often wanders off into a labyrinth from which it never emerges. In some cases the shortcomings are due to coverups and in some cases to stupidity. There are too many cases in which a man at a certain level makes sure that the employee he hires to serve just below him is dumber than he is, so as not to be a threat to his job.

Very obviously, L'Enfant Plaza is not sensitive to the various wavelengths that resonate in the spectrum of command. Paul Reistrup is, without question, light years ahead of his predecessor, who sought only to destroy the major portion of Amtrak, but he has failed up to now in assuming a firm grip on his company and developing the grapevines he needs in order to know what is happening over the system at any hour of night or day. This must be done rapidly along with the formulation of a plan to place the bulk of Amtrak's existing car fleet in good working order post haste.

Since these shortcomings exist and oppression from outside opposition is intense, Amtrak has slipped into a poverty cycle and has consequently developed a defense mechanism: all Amtrak can do is complain about old, wornout, 25-year old equipment and run to Congress for money to buy new cars at $5-900,000 a copy compared to converting for $100,000 existing cars whose structures are as sound as the day they were built.

Or, if the budget falls short they run to Congress for more money just to operate on, and if they don't get it they start holding their stock-in-trade for ransom by threatening to discontinue trains or cut service. When a Congressman and his constituents object to the service being cut in their district, Amtrak says "If you don't like it, then gimme some more money." They don't say "Give me some money to rebuild the cars and clean up the problem once and for all"; they simply throw good money after bad by using it to run trains around the country dragging hot cars which are alienating patronage that should be in the process of being cultivated so as to bring more patronage so the doles could be deleted.

Both the public and Congress are getting sick of it. It is time to demand that Congress force Amtrak into a massive car upgrading program. General Motors should be forced to give Amtrak a better break on the defective locomotives they sold them. It seems that derailments have virtually stopped since the locomotive truck oscillation problem was uncovered. People understand track problems. They know it is not Amtrak's fault, and if the train is comfortable they will pay little attention anyway--particularly if they know that delays are due to work on and improvement of the tracks.

The operating organization must be tightened up so there is an absolute responsibility at every level. If someone goofs off, he should be disciplined by the man above him. If a man is found to be truly incompetent, he should be dismissed, not simply moved over to a comfortable slot and made to become a part of a welfare system that has developed within Amtrak and which continues to feed and clothe those who haven't cut the mustard. Some heads have rolled and more need to--and when they roll they need to stay rolled, not be glued back on. Some of these salaries will pay for a lot of car upgrading.

In the meantime, when Amtrak threatens to cut off the FLORIDIAN or reduce service on the INTER-AMERICAN or EMPIRE BUILDER or any other train which can certainly be productive in its own area if properly equipped and maintained, the Congressman should tell Amtrak to keep their cotton-picking hands off his train and simply cut off one in the Northeast Corridor instead, where they have a couple of dozen or so. Why should they pick on his train just because they ran it up and down the line with the air conditioning not working, the potties not flushing, and the plumbing broken in the diner so they can't serve meals? They should quit trying to say that a train isn't well-utilized just because it is in Florida or Montana or California. Nonsense! They should place the blame where it belongs, on Amtrak's failure to make the equipment work, rendering it impossible for the public to respond.

If Amtrak goes ahead with efforts to remove the FLORIDIAN, it will probably constitute a test case as to whether they will continue to revolve in their poverty cycle, ransoming the Congressmen and disenfranchising the public by removing their service and inequitably distributing it over the nation. All concerned should make themselves very vocal in the case of the FLORIDIAN, which will apparently go on the block first. Its operation must be cleaned up and it must be re-routed thru Atlanta, where the traffic potential is greatest.

Moreover, Amtrak must stand up to recalcitrant railroads who present inordinate demands for inaugurating requested service or do a slovenly job of handling what they have. The Amtrak concept was created, ostensibly, because all parties involved entered into an agreement in good faith to revitalize rail passenger service. Parties who lack integrity and repudiate this agreement should have all the power of hell loosed against them until the issue is resolved.

It is generally believed that Congress will grant any reasonable amount if they can be assured it is for constructive, long-term growth and improvement backed by a spirit of aggressiveness, resolve and determination. Everyone is fed up with the band-aid approach. The goons are gone from DOT and we finally have a Secretary who believes in public transportation. It's time to get the act together. Failure to do so is going to bring Amtrak's heirarchy under increasing criticism.

The above article is reprinted in slightly condensed form from The Clearance Card, membership newsletter of the Southwest Railroad Historical Society, August issue.

ABOARD THE LAST POST OFFICE CAR
by Richard L. Walker

How does one begin an ending? In this case it's a rather special ending, the termination of 113 years of U.S. mail distribution on board Railway Post Office cars. It all came to a conclusion at about 4:20am on July 1 at Washington DC Union Station, as train 3 (Amtrak listing was #193, tho it carried only mail and no passengers) rolled to a stop for the last time. Another railroading era had ended. I was fortunate enough to make that last run of the Railway Mail Service.

The consist of "NY & WASH RPO TR 3" on June 30 was rather impressive for a 5-car train devoted solely to carrying and distributing the U.S. mails: GG-1 #4935, freshly restored to her former Pennsylvania Railroad splendor, scrubbed and glistening on the front end; freshly-washed mail storage (baggage) cars 7551 and 7625, lettered Penn Central (ex-PRR); freshly-washed and scrubbed railway post office cars 6536 and 6546, lettered Penn Central (ex-PRR), tho 6546 was the only one completely lettered "United States Mail Railway Post Office"; and snack bar coach 3949, painted and lettered for Amtrak. Car 3949 was originally a NYC coach, #3113, and was the first car so converted by the old NYC to snack bar service in the late 1960s, then renumbered 3200. The usual last car was a conventional rider coach, but on this last run Amtrak furnished a manned and functioning bar service for what, in RPO tradition, becomes a rolling farewell party. It's traditional on the last run not to worry about sorting the mail--the one time that such a celebration would be overlooked by higher postal officials.

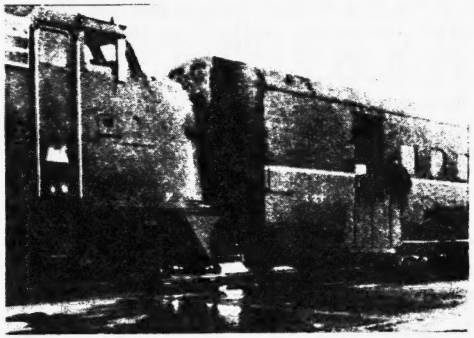
Earlier on the evening of June 30 both the U.S. Postmaster General and the Postmaster of New York City had visited the RPO crew and their train, deep in the bowels of New York's Pennsylvania Station. By the time I arrived, the officials had departed and a half-hearted attempt was being made to load the last mails aboard the train. Already the bar car was doing a brisk business, complements of Amtrak. Many retired or off-duty RPO clerks were there to bid the final trip off into history. Also, many members of the media, various publications, and a small group of rail enthusiasts were on the platform, making notes, taking pictures or talking with some of the crew. While the atmosphere was not funereal, it was rather subdued, and one could really feel that "end of an era" emotion all about the train.

Because it was a unique situation, passengers were carried that night, and tickets were required, tho Amtrak wisely did not advertise that fact. So, with ticket in hand, I boarded car 3949 shortly before our scheduled 11:40pm departure time. In a few minutes PRR #4935 began to hum, and we silently moved away from New York, away from those well-wishers who came down to watch a grand tradition come to a close.

After a speedy trip across the Jersey meadow, we were in Newark, and we quickly set about the business of loading what seemed to be hundreds of bags and cartons of mail. (Most of the mail loaded would normally have been carried as storage mail anyway, as it would have been impossible to work all of it even on a normal night; it was ready to be fed into the Postal Service's automatic letter sorting machines at the next post office.) While in Newark, a mail clerk neatly chalked on the side of one of the RPO cars "LAST TRIP 6-30-77."

By the time we left Newark it was well into July 1, and our little train rushed across the New Jersey landscape. It seemed that at almost every station we passed on our way to Philadelphia there was the flashing of camera equipment as fans bid farewell to train 3.

The registered mail was properly attended to, but all the rest lay quietly on the tables in the RPO cars, waiting for those traditionally efficient fingers to send them on their way, which tonight would not. Instead, time was spent in reminiscence of days gone by in the Railway Mail Service, the days of steam, of other runs on other railroads by "boomer" clerks who moved from route to route to avoid being in a stationary post office. Others talked about the pros and cons of retiring or sticking it out "inside" a post office somewhere else. As most of these men had many years of seniority, many of them were already qualified to take their pensions. Some of them knew my father when he was a mail clerk on the Rouses Pt & Albany (D&H), or they knew men I still work with at the Albany Postal Facility.



Railway Post Office car on an Amtrak passenger train: in late 1971, when Amtrak was barely six months old, a retired Northern Pacific Railway Post Office car, no. 427, ran as a baggage car on the Chicago-Oakland train that was later named the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR. Photo by Message Media.

It was hoped that there would be a chance for some waves and shouts to the crew on train 4, making its last run from Washington to New York, since we were to meet them must north of Frankford Jct. (near Philadelphia). However, this was not to be. We never saw them, and when we arrived at a very crowded 30th Street Station in Philly, we were informed that they had left on time and that we had passed them in the night. If so, our combined passing speed must have been somewhere around 180mph, based on allowable track speeds between Trenton and Philly. No wonder we didn't see them.

We received our most splendid farewell at Philadelphia. There were dozens of people to see us off, plenty of railfans, many retired RPO clerks and their families, the media people, and rumor had it that the Postmaster and the Mayor were there. The storage mail was loaded and unloaded, the registered mail was signed on and off the train, and countless pieces of paper, from stamped envelopes to dollar bills were passed in and out to interested persons who wanted the ultimate memento of the occasion--the black-inked imprint of the RPO stamp canceling iron. At about 1:40am we bid adieu to the City of Brotherly Love and headed on to Baltimore. At times we hit speeds that the conductor told me broke 100mph, but the track felt good and those old 1915 RPO cars rode well.

We arrived at Baltimore at about 2:55am and our luck ran out. The lead RPO car, #6536, on its last run, decided to die before reaching its destination. Its lights had been failing since we left Newark, but somewhere north of Baltimore it suffered an unidentified but decidedly dangerous malfunction of its brake system, and the car had to be cut out and left. The mail aboard would have to be loaded on a tractor-trailer and brought to Washington later in the morning.

At about 3:50am, some 15 minutes late, we rushed out of Baltimore on our last leg into Washington. The engineer made up the lost time with some great high speed running (bless those GG-1's!) and we arrived at

(continued on page 12)

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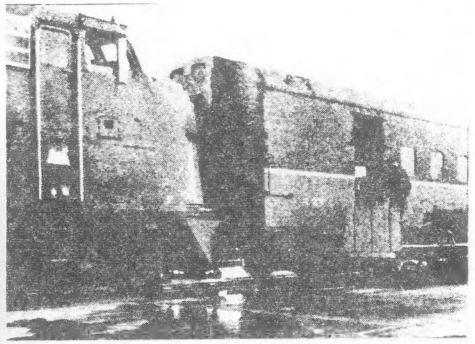
Because it was a unique situation, passengers were carried that night, and tickets were required, tho Amtrak wisely did not advertise that fact. So, with ticket in hand, I boarded car 3949 shortly before our scheduled 11:40pm departure time. In a few minutes PRR #4935 began to hum, and we silently moved away from New York, away from those well-wishers who came down to watch a grand tradition come to a close.

After a speedy trip across the Jersey meadow, we were in Newark, and we quickly set about the business of loading what seemed to be hundreds of bags and cartons of mail. (Most of the mail loaded would normally have been carried as storage mail anyway, as it would have been impossible to work all of it even on a normal night; it was ready to be fed into the Postal Service's automatic letter sorting machines at the next post office.) While in Newark, a mail clerk neatly chalked on the side of one of the RPO cars "LAST TRIP 6-30-77."

By the time we left Newark it was well into July 1, and our little train rushed across the New Jersey landscape. It seemed that at almost every station we passed on our way to Philadelphia there was the flashing of camera equipment as fans bid farewell to train 3.

The registered mail was properly attended to, but all the rest lay quietly on the tables in the RPO cars, waiting for those traditionally efficient fingers to send them on their way, which tonight would not. Instead, time was spent in reminiscence of days gone by in the Railway Mail Service, the days of steam, of other runs on other railroads by "boomer" clerks who moved from route to route to avoid being in a stationary post office. Others talked about the pros and cons of retiring or sticking it out "inside" a post office somewhere else. As most of these men had many years of seniority, many of them were already qualified to take their pensions. Some of them knew my father when he was a mail clerk on the Rouses Pt & Albany (D&H), or they knew men I still work with at the Albany Postal Facility.



Railway Post Office car on an Amtrak passenger train: in late 1971, when Amtrak was barely six months old, a retired Northern Pacific Railway Post Office car, no. 427, ran as a baggage car on the Chicago-Oakland train that was later named the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR. Photo by Message Media.

It was hoped that there would be a chance for some waves and shouts to the crew on train 4, making its last run from Washington to New York, since we were to meet them must north of Frankford Jct. (near Philadelphia). However, this was not to be. We never saw them, and when we arrived at a very crowded 30th Street Station in Philly, we were informed that they had left on time and that we had passed them in the night. If so, our combined passing speed must have been somewhere around 180mph, based on allowable track speeds between Trenton and Philly. No wonder we didn't see them.

We received our most splendid farewell at Philadelphia. There were dozens of people to see us off, plenty of railfans, many retired RPO clerks and their families, the media people, and rumor had it that the Postmaster and the Mayor were there. The storage mail was loaded and unloaded, the registered mail was signed on and off the train, and countless pieces of paper, from stamped envelopes to dollar bills were passed in and out to interested persons who wanted the ultimate memento of the occasion--the black-inked imprint of the RPO stamp canceling iron. At about 1:40am we bid adieu to the City of Brotherly Love and headed on to Baltimore. At times we hit speeds that the conductor told me broke 100mph, but the track felt good and those old 1915 RPO cars rode well.

We arrived at Baltimore at about 2:55am and our luck ran out. The lead RPO car, #6536, on its last run, decided to die before reaching its destination. Its lights had been failing since we left Newark, but somewhere north of Baltimore it suffered an unidentified but decidedly dangerous malfunction of its brake system, and the car had to be cut out and left. The mail aboard would have to be loaded on a tractor-trailer and brought to Washington later in the morning.

At about 3:50am, some 15 minutes late, we rushed out of Baltimore on our last leg into Washington. The engineer made up the lost time with some great high speed running (bless those GG-1's!) and we arrived at

(continued on page 12)

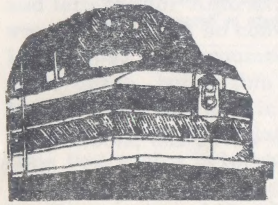
Readers Rate the Trains

1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9

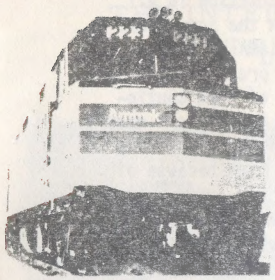
Extremely poor — Average, acceptable — Extremely good

Here are the results of RTN's fifth semi-annual reader train rating survey, covering the period Jan 1, 1977 to June 30, 1977. The figures in the tables are the average (mean) ratings volunteered by readers on the 1-9 judgment scale shown above. The last column in each table is the rank of each train within its group, ranked on the basis of category A, Overall Impression. While it is possible to rank the trains in a number of other ways, we have for consistency followed this ranking procedure that we have used in our four previous surveys. If a train does not appear in our tables, it is because we received too few ratings of it. Our last survey appeared in the First February issue, 1977. As space permits in subsequent issues, we will print selected rater comments on the trains.

Our sincere thanks to everyone who participated in this survey.



SHORT DISTANCE TRAINS	A. OVERALL	B. NON-FOOD CREW	C. FOOD, LOUNGE CREW	D. FOOD QUALITY	E. CONDITION OF CARS	F. ROUTING	G. STATION SERVICES	H. TRACK & ROADBED	I. SCHEDULING	J. PROMOTION	K. TYPE OF CARS	PRESENT RANK
COLONIAL	8.00	7.2	8.0	5.8	8.4	7.8	6.4	7.0	7.8	7.0	8.8	1
BLUE RIDGE	7.75	8.0	7.2	6.5	8.8	7.5	4.6	6.3	7.5	4.4	8.3	2
PALMETTO	7.75	7.4	7.2	5.9	8.8	8.2	7.0	7.0	8.1	6.0	7.8	2
BLACK HAWK	7.60	8.4	5.4	6.5	6.0	8.4	6.2	7.4	7.0	4.2	7.6	4
Detroit Amfleet	7.58	7.7	7.1	5.4	8.7	8.6	6.6	6.0	7.8	5.1	7.7	5
ABRAHAM LINCOLN	7.50	6.8	6.1	4.9	8.1	8.2	6.1	6.5	7.4	4.2	7.1	6
Detroit Turboliners	7.50	7.5	6.5	5.2	8.8	7.5	5.8	5.0	5.6	3.0	7.2	6
BLUE WATER LIMITED	7.50	7.8	6.8	5.5	7.8	8.8	6.5	6.2	7.5	5.0	7.5	6
N. E. Corridor Amfleet	7.48	7.0	7.2	5.9	8.3	8.3	6.9	6.6	7.4	6.4	7.7	9
Milwaukee Turboliners	7.43	6.9	6.4	5.7	7.8	8.1	7.8	6.8	7.1	5.1	7.4	10
STATE HOUSE	7.40	7.0	7.0	5.4	8.6	8.2	6.6	6.8	6.8	3.8	8.2	11
SAN DIEGANS	7.38	7.4	6.9	5.5	8.2	8.6	7.1	6.9	8.2	6.2	8.0	12
Empire Serv. Turboliners	7.35	7.0	6.3	6.1	8.8	8.2	6.8	5.5	7.7	6.3	7.8	13
ILLINOIS ZEPHYR	7.02	6.8	5.9	5.6	7.4	7.7	6.7	5.2	8.1	5.1	6.5	14
ILLINI & SHAWNEE	7.00	7.6	6.5	5.8	7.8	8.8	6.2	7.0	7.6	4.4	7.3	15
SAN JOAQUIN	7.00	7.5	7.1	6.2	8.2	5.2	6.6	7.8	6.4	4.6	7.6	15
N. E. Metroliners	6.91	6.5	6.3	5.5	6.9	8.7	6.7	6.4	7.9	7.3	7.1	17
PUGET SOUND/MT. RAINIER	6.50	5.5	6.5	4.5	7.5	8.0	6.0	6.0	7.5	4.0	7.5	18
ARROWHEAD	6.50	7.5	6.0	5.5	6.5	7.0	6.5	6.5	8.0	3.5	7.5	18
PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL	5.50	5.8	5.5	3.0	8.0	8.0	6.2	6.2	6.8	5.0	6.8	20
Inland Route RDCs	5.14	6.1			4.4	7.1	5.7	6.1	6.9	2.8	5.3	21
PEORIA ROCKET (RI)	4.10	7.2	6.8	3.6	3.9	6.5	4.4	1.2	4.2	1.2	5.3	22
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	



Amtrak

LONG DISTANCE TRAINS	A. OVERALL	B. NON-FOOD CREW	C. FOOD, LOUNGE CREW	D. FOOD QUALITY	E. CONDITION OF CARS	F. ROUTING	G. STATION SERVICES	H. TRACK & ROADBED	I. SCHEDULING	J. PROMOTION	K. TYPE OF CARS	PREVIOUS RANK	PRESENT RANK
RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR (DRGW)	8.22	7.2	7.8	7.9	8.1	8.7	6.7	7.6	7.4	4.0	8.6	1	1
AUTO-TRAIN (A-T)	7.75	7.6	8.0	5.0	7.2	8.5	5.8	6.6	8.4	6.8	7.6	3	2
SOUTHERN CRESCENT (SR)	7.71	7.6	7.6	8.2	7.7	7.8	6.7	6.5	7.1	6.1	7.6	4	3
SOUTHWEST LIMITED	7.29	7.2	6.7	7.0	7.3	7.7	7.4	6.7	7.6	5.3	7.7	5	4
ADIRONDACK	7.15	7.9	7.4	5.6	7.6	8.6	6.2	5.6	6.5	5.1	7.1	13	5
LONE STAR	7.14	7.3	7.2	7.6	7.2	7.3	6.4	7.2	6.6	3.7	7.6	10	6
PIONEER	7.00	7.3	7.3	4.7	7.3	8.7	4.7	7.3	6.0	6.7	5.0		7
NIGHT OWL	6.98	7.8	7.0	4.8	7.6	8.8	5.8	6.6	8.2	4.2	6.6	22	8
CHAMPION	6.75	6.4	6.4	7.0	6.4	6.8	6.6	7.2	7.2	4.9	7.4	11	9
LAKE SHORE LIMITED	6.68	6.9	6.6	6.8	6.1	7.7	6.3	6.0	5.9	4.3	6.4	21	10
NORTH COAST HIAWATHA	6.64	6.9	6.9	7.1	6.0	7.7	6.7	5.0	4.9	3.6	7.0	2	11
EMPIRE BUILDER	6.62	7.0	6.9	7.0	7.2	6.7	6.5	5.1	4.9	4.5	7.4	7	12
SILVER METEOR	6.60	7.0	7.4	7.0	6.0	7.3	6.5	6.8	6.4	5.2	6.5	6	13
COAST STARLIGHT	6.60	6.5	6.2	6.6	5.7	8.1	6.6	6.8	6.4	4.7	6.2	9	13
MONTREALER	6.49	6.3	7.4	7.5	6.2	7.3	6.7	5.3	6.6	4.1	6.6	20	15
JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY	6.47	7.1	7.0	6.0	7.9	7.4	6.1	6.2	5.3	3.6	6.3	26	16
SHENANDOAH	6.33	7.4	6.6	5.3	8.2	7.7	5.8	6.0	6.0	5.2	6.3	8	17
SILVER STAR	6.24	6.1	6.8	7.5	6.5	8.0	6.9	7.3	7.2	5.2	6.5	17	18
SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR	6.15	5.7	6.3	6.9	6.0	6.2	5.7	6.2	5.8	3.9	5.9	16	19
SUNSET LIMITED	5.97	6.1	5.8	6.2	6.0	7.2	6.0	6.0	5.6	3.3	7.0	12	20
BROADWAY LIMITED	5.66	6.5	6.6	6.8	5.2	6.6	5.8	4.0	4.9	4.1	6.0	18	21
INTER-AMERICAN	5.43	5.1	5.9	5.8	4.9	5.0	6.1	7.1	5.1	2.7	5.3	14	22
PANAMA LIMITED	5.43	5.7	6.1	5.4	6.0	7.7	5.2	5.1	5.8	3.7	4.8	19	22
MOUNTAINEER	5.33	7.8	7.7	5.8	7.3	6.0	5.8	6.7	5.3	1.5	6.0	23	24
NATIONAL LIMITED	5.30	6.8	5.8	5.6	5.2	6.8	4.8	5.3	5.2	2.8	5.4	24	25
NIAGARA RAINBOW	5.29	6.1	5.5	5.7	5.9	8.1	5.3	6.6	5.6	2.3	5.9	27	26
FLORIDIAN	4.69	6.3	6.6	7.0	6.3	4.2	5.3	5.1	4.2	4.4	6.0	14	27
CANADIAN TRAINS													
CP CANADIAN	7.98	7.9	8.0	7.2	8.0	8.8	6.2	7.5	7.6	3.5	8.4	2	1
CN OCEAN	7.45	6.0	6.8	7.4	8.2	8.0	6.5	7.2	7.0	6.2	6.7	7	2
CN CAVALIER	7.44	7.9	4.8	3.9	7.6	8.0	7.4	7.6	8.5	4.2	7.2	1	3
CN Turbotrains	7.33	5.7	7.5	6.0	7.7	8.3	7.7	6.0	7.7	8.0	7.7	3	4
CN Rapidos	7.20	7.6	7.2	5.2	7.8	8.6	5.8	7.8	8.0	5.6	7.0	4	5
CN Tempo Trains	6.86	7.5	6.7	6.5	7.0	7.9	7.1	7.9	8.1	5.6	7.2	5	6
CN SUPER CONTINENTAL	6.67	7.8	7.2	6.7	7.5	6.8	6.8	5.5	4.0	4.7	6.5	5	7
ONR NORTHLAND	6.50	7.2	7.4	6.4	7.0	8.0	6.8	7.5	7.5	2.5	6.7	8	8
CP ATLANTIC LIMITED	5.75	5.7	7.4	5.2	7.5	8.5	3.6	4.6	7.2	1.8	7.4	9	9
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K		

Our train rating survey results place the RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR once more in top position among long-distance trains--and in fact in top position in all 3 categories of trains. The top four cruise trains remain in the same order as before, with the notable exception that the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA drops precipitously from 2nd place to 11th. This was caused by the problems of last winter in timekeeping and equipment substitutions--some of them continuing to the present time. The EMPIRE BUILDER's drop from 7th to 12th is a result of similar problems. The SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR drops from 16th to 19th and the COAST STARLIGHT from 9th to 13th, all pushed downward in large part because of timekeeping and scheduling problems during the SDP40F mess.

Raters evidently are happy with the major Amfleeted Eastern trains--the COLONIAL, BLUE RIDGE and PALMETTO are rated at the top of their list, and the Amfleeted JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY jumps from 26th to 16th, even tho it lost sleepers and conventional dining car.

At the bottom of the heap among long-distance trains is the FLORIDIAN, for which no noticeable improvements have been forthcoming, and which is now the unhappy subject of a possible discontinuance action. The Rock Island's poor PEORIA ROCKET deserves some kind of recognition for continuing to hold on to bottom position among short distance trains.

The best food on North American trains, our raters tell us, is to be found on Southern Railway's SOUTHERN CRESCENT, the rating of 8.2 beating the RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR's by a tiny margin. Ratings indicate that the worst food on any long distance train is found on the new Amfleet PIONEER, but that doesn't prevent the new train from starting out life with a very healthy rank of 7th--in spite of airline-style food and no sleeping cars.

Other big changes include the NIGHT OWL's rise from 22nd to 8th--another example of a recently-Amfleeted overnight train--the SHENANDOAH's drop from 8th to 17th, and drops of 8 ranks each for the SUNSET and INTER-AMERICAN--both the recent victims of timekeeping problems. The ADIRONDACK jumps from 13th to 5th place with the introduction of Turboliner equipment. The LAKE SHORE LIMITED, RTN's "Train of the Year" for 1976, makes a significant rise from 21st to 10th place, even without new equipment to make it more attractive. Apparently the service has just generally smoothed out. We will find out in more detail just what riders liked and disliked in these trains as we look into some of their spontaneous comments in future issues.

(continued from page 9)

the station on time. The last of the libations were long ago consumed, the sandwiches were long gone, and for those last 15 minutes before we came to a stop, there were the last goodbyes, handshakes, pats on the back, some last photos, and then it was all over.

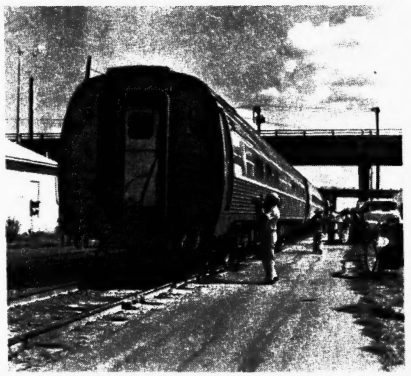
Well--almost over. The mail had to be unloaded. That which was never worked had to be shipped over to the Washington post office to be fed into the automatic letter sorting machines, and according to some of the men in the crew, a clerk named Lee Brooks, the Registered Mail Clerk, performed the last official act to bring the 113-year history of the Railway Mail Service to a close. He had to make sure that the registered mail was properly and safely signed over to the clerks from the Washington DC post office. Engine 4935 was uncoupled and run around the train on her way to the engine terminal.

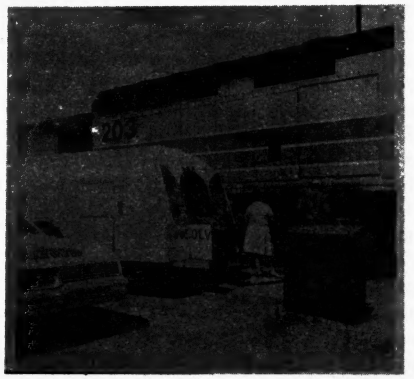
As the crew slowly, a few men at a time, departed from train 3, there were a few more photos taken to remind themselves of their highly efficient (we can forgive them for this last run) teamwork. Then it was over.

The train to New York City was scheduled about two hours ahead of No. 3, so we were the last one. The last chapter was written, the last letter stamped, and the Railway Mail Service was history. Since I grew up with it, I was glad to have been able to see it off and can only say thanks to Frank Bauer, General Foreman, NY & WASH RPO TR#3, for the on-the-spot invitation to go along.

THE INTER-AMERICAN GOES AMFLEET

by Alfred E. Ehm





Photos by the author.

The first re-equipped INTER-AMERICAN, Amtrak train 21, arrived in San Antonio on August 9, two hours late. The NBC and CBS affiliates had camera crews at the disgraceful site where the train has been making its stops since its halting inception January 27, 1973. About a dozen railfans and observers watched about 20 passengers step off the four-car train.

Because of the limited tank capacity of the F40 engine (and because of the reported lack of refueling facilities at the Fort Worth station), Amtrak made a 1-year arrangement with Dixie Solvents of San Antonio to refuel both trains at the Alamo City boarding site. On this first occasion engine 203 took on 500 gallons of diesel fuel. Dixie had a second loaded fuel truck on hand in case it was needed.

Several Amtrak officials and supervisors were on the train to assist the San Antonio servicing crew (a private entrepreneur) and the successive train and engine crews as they boarded. Also aboard was a representative of Amtrak's public relations office who talked with the TV and newspaper people as the train stopped here for over 20 minutes.

Amtrak's announcement of the re-equipping of trains 21 and 22 (and the dropping of sleeping car service) was carried by the San Antonio Express on July 30, but was not mentioned by the other San Antonio paper, The Light, nor even the Dallas Morning News. As at the time of the first daily train on June 16, the City of San Antonio, Bexar County, and not even the Chamber of Commerce, seemed to be represented at the occasion of the first Amfleet INTER-AMERICAN.

The last northbound train, on the same day, was a sad sight. Covered with the grime of its journey from Chicago to Laredo and back part of the way, with three neglected-appearing E units at the front, it formed a stark contrast to the glistening and spotless trains that Amtrak operated in the first year of the run.

The brief TV reports during the 6 o'clock news seemed to make the most of the fact that the train was late. Having missed the report itself, I managed to catch only the news team's banter on the CBS station about the fact that the trains were hours late ten years ago and had obviously not improved since. NBC mentioned the train's tardiness and pointed out that according to Amtrak officials it is routinely sidetracked by the operating railroad--the MoPac was not mentioned by name--for the benefit of its freight trains. During the 40-second interview the particular Amtrak official seemed to go out of his way to play down sidetracking by the MoPac, and tried to suggest that the tardiness was almost exclusively the result of equipment failures and track repairs.

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(continued from page 9)

the station on time. The last of the libations were long ago consumed, the sandwiches were long gone, and for those last 15 minutes before we came to a stop, there were the last goodbyes, handshakes, pats on the back, some last photos, and then it was all over.

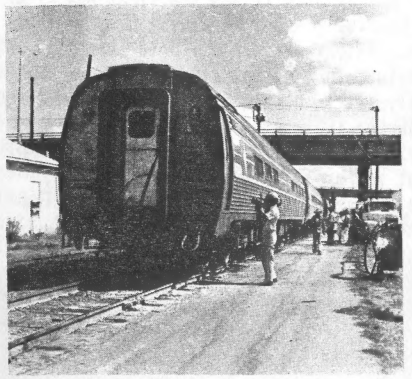
Well--almost over. The mail had to be unloaded. That which was never worked had to be shipped over to the Washington post office to be fed into the automatic letter sorting machines, and according to some of the men in the crew, a clerk named Lee Brooks, the Registered Mail Clerk, performed the last official act to bring the 113-year history of the Railway Mail Service to a close. He had to make sure that the registered mail was properly and safely signed over to the clerks from the Washington DC post office. Engine 4935 was uncoupled and run around the train on her way to the engine terminal.

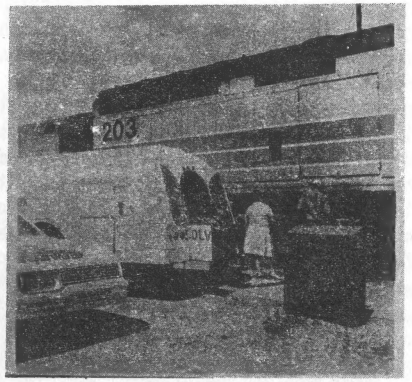
As the crew slowly, a few men at a time, departed from train 3, there were a few more photos taken to remind themselves of their highly efficient (we can forgive them for this last run) teamwork. Then it was over.

The train to New York City was scheduled about two hours ahead of No. 3, so we were the last one. The last chapter was written, the last letter stamped, and the Railway Mail Service was history. Since I grew up with it, I was glad to have been able to see it off and can only say thanks to Frank Bauer, General Foreman, NY & WASH RPO TR#3, for the on-the-spot invitation to go along.

THE INTER-AMERICAN GOES AMFLEET

by Alfred E. Ehm





Photos by the author.

The first re-equipped INTER-AMERICAN, Amtrak train 21, arrived in San Antonio on August 9, two hours late. The NBC and CBS affiliates had camera crews at the disgraceful site where the train has been making its stops since its halting inception January 27, 1973. About a dozen railfans and observers watched about 20 passengers step off the four-car train.

Because of the limited tank capacity of the F40 engine (and because of the reported lack of refueling facilities at the Fort Worth station), Amtrak made a 1-year arrangement with Dixie Solvents of San Antonio to refuel both trains at the Alamo City boarding site. On this first occasion engine 203 took on 500 gallons of diesel fuel. Dixie had a second loaded fuel truck on hand in case it was needed.

Several Amtrak officials and supervisors were on the train to assist the San Antonio servicing crew (a private entrepreneur) and the successive train and engine crews as they boarded. Also aboard was a representative of Amtrak's public relations office who talked with the TV and newspaper people as the train stopped here for over 20 minutes.

Amtrak's announcement of the re-equipping of trains 21 and 22 (and the dropping of sleeping car service) was carried by the San Antonio Express on July 30, but was not mentioned by the other San Antonio paper, The Light, nor even the Dallas Morning News. As at the time of the first daily train on June 16, the City of San Antonio, Bexar County, and not even the Chamber of Commerce, seemed to be represented at the occasion of the first Amfleet INTER-AMERICAN.

The last northbound train, on the same day, was a sad sight. Covered with the grime of its journey from Chicago to Laredo and back part of the way, with three neglected-appearing E units at the front, it formed a stark contrast to the glistening and spotless trains that Amtrak operated in the first year of the run.

The brief TV reports during the 6 o'clock news seemed to make the most of the fact that the train was late. Having missed the report itself, I managed to catch only the news team's banter on the CBS station about the fact that the trains were hours late ten years ago and had obviously not improved since. NBC mentioned the train's tardiness and pointed out that according to Amtrak officials it is routinely sidetracked by the operating railroad--the MoPac was not mentioned by name--for the benefit of its freight trains. During the 40-second interview the particular Amtrak official seemed to go out of his way to play down sidetracking by the MoPac, and tried to suggest that the tardiness was almost exclusively the result of equipment failures and track repairs.

Mixed Train of Thoughts

THE INTER-AMERICAN was re-equipped with Amfleet cars on Aug 8 (see story on page 13), eliminating its sleeping car service. Amtrak said it was the first new equipment on the route in two decades, and hopefully would eliminate air conditioning problems that have plagued the train. Amtrak asked the ICC to exempt it from the sleeping car requirement on the route, since no compatible sleepers are now available, and there has been "relatively little demand" for sleeper space, with an average of 5.7 sleeper passengers during the months of March-May, on each trip. Some rail supporters did not immediately buy this argument, and one wrote the ICC about the train's many problems that scare passengers away, and asked, "Isn't it more of a miracle that an average of 5.7 passengers have used the sleeper?"..... AIR CONDITIONING PROBLEMS are not the only ones hurting the INTER-AMERICAN. The problem of perennial lateness makes the train outstanding in that respect. Many agree that the MoPac sidetracks the passenger train for freights quite frequently. Such sidetracking is a violation of federal law. The train's on-time performance in April and May was equalled only by the NATIONAL LIMITED--as low as 7.7%. An Amtrak spokesman confirmed that the corporation is considering legal action against the railroad. The press in the area served by the train seemed to actively support such a move.....

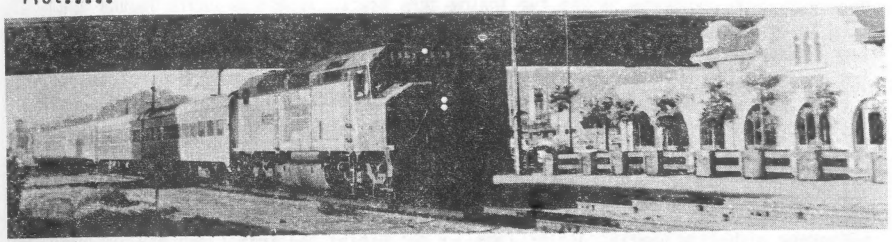
* * *

THE MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION of RR Passengers on Aug 9 issued a position paper on the plan to cut the EMPIRE BUILDER back to 4 times weekly. Howard J. Davy, President of MinnARP, said that loss of daily train service would create hardships for people along the route, where there is "poor to non-existent air and bus service and marginal highway conditions." MinnARP called upon Congress to increase Amtrak's appropriation, and asked for adequate promotion for the train and studies to see if more passengers could be attracted by tapping the Portland OR market by direct thru service to there via Pasco WA. Davy called the attitudes exhibited by Congress "regressive" and "self-defeating." The Mayor of Havre MT called the plan "very wrong." He said "They aren't considering the people who depend solely on the trains... There are limited areas you can go in Montana by plane." A Wolf Point Chamber of Commerce spokesman complained of the "limited access to transportation" without the daily train. An Eastern reader who know Montana said that the route is not even paralleled by bus service on portions in Montana; from Grand Forks ND to Spokane WA there is nothing but a string of independent bus companies running one bus a day--with long layovers at each bus change point, plus that gap in Montana. There is no parallel interstate highway Grand Forks to Spokane.....

MUCH TRACK WORK is reported going on on the Milwaukee Road between Chicago and Minneapolis, the line used by the two Seattle-Chicago trains, and this presumably would contribute to the rumored faster schedules for Sept 8. Recall that the Milwaukee's tracks deteriorated badly in last winter's severe weather. The railroad applied for government aid to repair its line..... A BUS LINK from the Virginia Tidewater area to Amtrak's HILLTOPPER at Petersburg begins Aug 15. The bus will stop at the Stewart Travel Agency, 3205 King Street, Portsmouth. Buses leave Portsmouth daily at 11:45am and 3:05pm, and leave Petersburg at 1:55pm and 5:20pm. Amtrak's HILLTOPPER promotion mentioned last issued proved to include the biggest travel bargain promotion we've heard of lately: a trip on the new train anywhere between Bluefield WV and Richmond VA for only $1.00--a one-day promotion good on Aug 16, and requiring a reservation.....

AMTRAK AND AUTO-TRAIN will discontinue their joint FLORIDIAN-AUTO-TRAIN venture effective next month. The last northbound combined train will leave Sanford Sept 2, and the last southbound one will be on Sept 3. Starting Sept 9, Auto-Train will begin a separate weekend operation Louisville-Sanford.....

AUTO-TRAIN CORPORATION has denied, in a letter to RTN, that it intends to discontinue its passenger service--a rumor mentioned here last issue. The agreement with Eastern Air lines is to "accommodate the thousands of passengers who wish to fly to their destinations and who want the use of their personal automobile upon arrival" said an Auto-Train spokeswoman..... A CONTINUED DRAMATIC rise in SAN DIEGAN patronage was found in preliminary July figures, compared to July 1976--an increase of 63%, from 43,997 to 71,793 riders. The PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL was up 30% and the SAN JOAQUIN up 11.5%..... THE SECOND DAY of Amfleet operation on the INTER-AMERICAN saw a truck-train collision during the southbound run, near Dallas. The truck driver was killed, and the train had minor damage and was delayed a short time..... BOARD OF DIRECTORS of Amtrak has 7 vacancies to be filled soon, and the White House's list of nominees has been making the rounds, but can't be acted upon by the Senate until after the August recess. Insiders hint that there are some surprising and interesting names on the list.....



FRIDAY-THE-THIRTEENTH train (photo above): the SAN JOAQUIN, train 711, ran thru Berkeley CA on May 13 with a very atypical consist of one SDP40F (#615) and five conventional cars, apparently including articulated coaches. An Amfleet consist the day before had a minor derailment in the Oakland yards and was out of commission. The unlucky train is now going to be cut back to four days a week. In this RTN photo the train is passing the China Station Restaurant, formerly the SP Berkeley University Avenue station..... THE SEARCH FOR a Chief Operating Officer for Amtrak finds the name of Marty Garelick of the Milwaukee Road being mentioned. One major problem with obtaining such a person is Amtrak's salary limits imposed by Congress. In industry one can earn a lot more than the sixty thousand that Amtrak could pay, unless the corporation could get a waiver.....

MORE RUMORED CUTBACKS in service to stay within Amtrak's budget include possibly dropping the ABRAHAM LINCOLN, one Chicago-Milwaukee train and one Detroit train. Cutting the Oakland-Denver leg of the SF ZEPHYR to tri-weekly was considered but dropped for the present. Amtrak said that every route will be scrutinized for possible cuts, and no route will be exempt..... AMTRAK HAS TAKEN delivery of some of the rebuilt SDP40F's, altered into F40PHR engines (that's no joke--it's the designation Amtrak is using, even tho "PHR" are the initials of its President; the first F40's were the F40PH's, and the added R is to indicate "rebuilt"), 5 of them by the end of July, and they are being used on lines out of Chicago. They are numbered 230-279, with the original F40's being 200-229. Amtrak will renumber some E8A's rebuilt into steam generator cars, to accommodate the new numbering system: E8's 265, 272, 299, 303, and 314 will become 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925 & 1926 respectively. Amtrak will use the F40PHR's to haul the bilevel cars. They differ from the F40PH's in that they have an 800kw generator, not 500kw; an 1800-gal fuel tank instead of 1500; and weigh 262,000 lbs maximum instead of 259,000, mostly due to the extra fuel carried. And hopefully they will not want to derail..... THE RESIGNATION OF C. Bruce Sterzing as President of the D&H Railroad came on July 27. The Washington Star reported that he was eased out of that position by pressure from the USRA--the agency wanted new management of the road before it would lend it $2 million to stave off financial woes.....

A MAMMOTH SHIFT to rail passenger and freight transportation between now and the year 1995 is forecast in a study prepared for the DOT by Frost & Sullivan, a market research firm. It foresees an increase in rail travel to 3% from the present 0.1% in the next 18 years--that's a 3000% increase. Railroads will carry the majority of freight traffic--52% instead of the present 38%. Bus travel will rise from 1.1% to 5.6%. Under local travel, automobile usage will drop from 91.5% to 71.7%. It doesn't seem that we're yet preparing adequately for these eventualities. Over half of the locomotives needed for such an upswing will be electric, the study says, with a total of 58,000 new locos needed by 1995..... THE FIRST BILEVEL cars are now not expected to be in revenue service until possibly early next year. This fall some of them will probably be run unannounced on routes around Chicago for test purposes, substituting for regular train consists. The third train to be assigned the bilevels (after the EMPIRE BUILDER and NORTH COAST HIAWATHA) is now to be the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR, not the STARLIGHT. The SFZ encounters cold weather in nearly as much abundance as the two trains thru Montana. Amtrak wants to use the cars in cold areas first for reliability, being thoroughly shaken up by last winter's freezing problems. Presently Amtrak uses 12 trainsets for the two Montana trains, but by running the BUILDER 4 days a week it can get by with 6 consists and 2 short consists (minus diner and sleepers) for the Chicago-Minneapolis-only runs. At first the bilevel consists will have no lounges, since they were ordered later.....

* * *

THERE'S MUCH DEBATE over who is in charge of the NE Corridor segment from Boston to the Rhode Island state line. Altho the MBTA owns the track, Amtrak operates the towers at Tower 1, Chick, Readville, Canton Junction and Attleboro. However, the B&M wants operating control of these towers as most of the trains are now B&M-operated. The MBTA apparently concurs in this, but no final decision has been made.....

THE NEW PIONEER train is averaging 120 passengers a day, Amtrak reports--more than expected. Between 80 and 100 riders per trip are needed to consider a run as fuel-efficient..... TWO SP FREIGHTS derailed early on Aug 2 in the Cascades 20 miles S.E. of Oakridge OR. The northbound freight derailed first, then a southbound train derailed while passing the wreck scene. For one day the line was blocked, and the COAST STARLIGHT was detoured on BN lines in Central Oregon..... THE MANAGING EDITOR of Trains Magazine, Rosemary Entringer, died July 29 in Milwaukee after a brief illness..... THE FIVE BIGGEST money-makers in the transportation field are all railroads, according to a Fortune Magazine survey. In order, they are Union Pacific, Norfolk & Western, Santa Fe, Southern Pacific, and the Chessie System. Each had 1976 profits of at least $100 million..... INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION set rules for bus service adequacy, effective Aug 8. They cover speeding up baggage handling, cleanliness and security of stations and on-board restrooms, provision for handicapped, provision for public announcement of bus departures, and a requirement that ticket refunds must be made within 30 days..... THE MOUNT RAINIER leaving Seattle at 5:30pm Aug 7 carried over 200 standees, and fist fights reportedly broke out in the hot weather, in hot cars uncooled because of late arrival of F40 engines from the BN engine terminal. The 7-car Amfleet train carried an estimated 630 riders.....

A SAN DIEGAN, Caltrak train 779, hit a Volkswagen van in Anaheim CA at 8pm Aug 6. The vehicle reportedly pulled around crossing gates into the path of the train. A woman and 3 children died, with one man passenger of the van surviving. In San Clemente, a light pole placed on Santa Fe tracks was found and removed 40 minutes before a southbound SAN DIEGAN passed about 9pm July 14. At the same town, a motorcyclist hit the tracks and was injured July 23. He was removed from the tracks just 10 minutes ahead of a SAN DIEGAN train's arrival.....

RTN is considering the possibility of some business improvement and expansion, and would be pleased to hear from any individual(s) interested in investing sums of $500 or more. Please write in confidentiality, indicating desired interest rate and repayment terms, if possible. Address: "Finance Dept.," Message Media, PO Box 9007, Berkeley, Calif. 94709. Thank you.

AMTRAK CUTS (continued from page 3)

By one count, the proposed FLORIDIAN discontinuance affects 82 Congressional districts, so it can be assumed that Amtrak hopes that Congress might be persuaded to appropriate more funds to maintain the system intact.

Other service cuts, some reported here earlier, are the discontinuance of the NY-LA thru sleeper on the NATIONAL LIMITED-SOUTHWEST LIMITED after July 31; the elimination of dinners (now sandwiches only) for Amcoach riders in the Corridor effective late July; the elimination of drawing rooms on the SILVER METEOR and CHAMPION as of Aug 2; the discontinuance of the first class diner and dome lounge on the SOUTHWEST LIMITED as of July 16; the discontinuance of Amclub service on the COLONIAL between DC and Newport News as of Aug 1; the discontinuance of Turboclub service on the Chicago-Milwaukee route. In other economy moves, Amtrak has been dropping personnel in many areas; for example, 15 jobs were reportedly cut off in the Chicago reservations bureau on Aug 5.

On Aug 10 Amtrak began soliciting public comment on the FLORIDIAN case. Amtrak asked interested individuals and groups to submit written comments on or before Oct 12. Amtrak wants to take some action in the matter as early as Dec 31. It has established a special toll-free telephone line to receive comment on the train from Aug 10 thru Oct 12 during the hours of 9am to 6pm Eastern Daylight Time (Amtrak said the line is for FLORIDIAN comments only, not for other matters). The number is 800-424-7966 from anywhere except the District of Columbia; from there, telephone Amtrak headquarters and ask for the Adequacy of Service Office. Three operators will handle the phones in shifts, two at a time, and will write down comments. On the first full day of operation, Aug 11, Amtrak said it received 175 calls, about 80% of them from Chattanooga. This number is about the maximum Amtrak can handle in one day. To submit written comments on the FLORIDIAN case, send them to Harold L. Graham, Project Office, Amtrak, 955 L'Enfant Plaza North, S.W., Washington DC 20024. The five alternative plans for the FLORIDIAN about which Amtrak wants comments are these: (1) Continue the present route with possible schedule and/or service modifications. (2) Re-route it Chicago-Nashville, Birmingham, Atlanta, Macon, Savannah, Jacksonville, Miami/St. Pete. (3) Re-route it Chicago-Nashville-Chattanooga-Atlanta-Macon-Savannah-Jacksonville-Miami/St. Pete. (4) Re-route it Chicago-Atlanta (via either Chattanooga or Birmingham)-Macon-Albany-Jacksonville. (5) Discontinue the train.

Public comments will become part of the public record and a summary of them will be posted at each station on the FLORIDIAN route. Public hearings will be held if the Amtrak Board deems them necessary. The Board will decide which of the alternatives ultimately is selected.

Watch these pages for announcement of the appearance soon of RTN's long-delayed first Rail Travel Yearbook. Thank you!

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"I want action. If there ain't a freight train around, I want you to hold the Amtrak train where it is until there is a freight train! We'll show 'em who's running this railroad. It ain't no striped-tie throwed-out laid-back ex-IC yahoo behind a desk in Washington."

--"Downley B. Pinks, chairman of the board of the Purgatory and Pacific Railroad" in Arkansas Gazette column by Richard Allin, July 26.

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB***

"Q.--As a businessman, what would you do with the intercity younks?
A.--As a businessman, I would close them up tomorrow."
--Southern Railway president L. Stanley Crane responding to question about intercity routes, The Macon (GA) News, July 11.

(Yoicks! All of them?)

Mailing date of this issue: August 16/17, 1977.

CARS & CONSISTS

*INTER-AMERICAN, train 22, San Antonio Aug 9 (last conventionally-equipped one): engines 426, 368, 413 (new paint scheme), all E "A" units; cars 1180, 6088, 6047, 4418, 4433, 2683. Train 21, same (1st Amfleet): engine 203 (F40); cars 1360 Ambag/mail, 21846, 21848, 20203.

*SOUTHWEST LIMITED, train 3, Kansas City Aug 2 (last run of NY-LA thru sleeper): engines 500, 505; cars 1040, 9994, 9905, 9940, 9960, 9949, 9973, 9982, 9922, 2217 "Indian Pony," 2728 "Pine Peak," 2371 "Regal Vale," dome 9201 "Starlight Dome," 2612 "Pacific Forum" thru slpr on at K.C., 1168 on at K.C. Train 4, same (last run of thru slpr): engines 521, 526; cars 1021, 9992, 9906, 9943, 9945, 9936, 9973, 9983, 9927, 2215 "Indian Maid," 2720 "Pine Gorge," 2351 "Regal Inn," 2553 "Central Park," 1120. Train 3, K.C. Jul 29: engines 518, 503; cars 9351, 9350, 9353 (deadhead domes), 1021, 9990, 9907, 9956, 9963, 9959, 9972, 9985, 2213 "Indian Flute," 2755 "Palm Lore," 2369 "Regal Stream," 2797 "Middle River," 1180, deadhead 5268, last 3 on at K.C.

*SHENANDOAH, train 33, Rowlesburg WV Jul 23: engine 229 (1st use of F40 on this train; used P30's); cars 21884, 20201 Amdinette, 21168.

*SUNSET LIMITED, train 2, New Iberia LA Jul 31: engines 616, 617, SR 6148; cars 8354 buffer, 1102, 9944, 9925, 9942, 9926, 4858, 3394, 8037, 2614 "Pac. Heights," 2508 "Blue Water," 2601 "Pac. Beach," dome 9251 "Silver Penthouse." SR F unit is one of 5 used by Amtrak in N.W. apparently being returned to SR.

*PANAMA LIMITED, train 58, Hammond LA Jul 30: engines 593 (SDP), 408 (E9A), 722 (P30); cars 1368, 21821, 21854, 20206, 20036, 21877, 21202, 21070.

*NATIONAL LIMITED, train 31, Kansas City Aug 10: engines 402, 408, 424 (E9As); cars 1020, 1199, 2798 "Toronto Islands," 2832 "Keene Valley," 8341, 3325 "Robert Morris," 5265, 5604, 5269, 5670, 5403, 8061, 5404, 5415, 1198 (last 6 cars for 160 Boy Scouts Pittsburgh-Flagstaff via train 3).

*FLORIDIAN, train 94-56, Lakeland FL Aug 7: engine 639; cars 1530, 2634 "Pac. Slope," 8018, dome 9560, 5453.

*SILVER METEOR, train 83, Richmond VA Jul 30: engines 645, 602; cars 1424, 5265, 4469, 5628, 8021, 4415, 4456, 4567, 4403, 3402, 8003, 2534 "Robin," 2784 "Seminole County," 2312 "Fort Lauderdale," 2028 "Loch Tarbet."

*NIAGARA RAINBOW, train 64, Rensselaer Jul 28: engines 443 (on at Buffalo), 406; cars 1605 "Fairfield County," 6024, 8200 "Blue Ridge Club," 6030 (international coach), (on at Buffalo:) 6440, 6409.

*Amtrak is leasing the following SP baggage cars: 6652, 6671, 6710, 6713-14, 6716-17, 6719-21, 6727, 6729-30, 6733, 6750.

RAIL FANTRIPS

Aug 27-28: "Casco Bay Ltd" Boston-Portland ME; 1st psgr train to Maine since 1964 via B&M RDCs. Adults $70, kids $35, incl. lodging, 4 meals, auction, 200-mi. RT. Mystic Valley Rwy Soc, Box 32, Mattapan MA 02126, 613-361-4445.

Oct 1: Bus trip to Roseville CA, visit SP shop; tour Old Sacramento RR Museum. Lv San Jose station 7:30am, lv Oakland station 8:30; $12 (over 18 only). Donald Tustin, Central Coast Chap. NRHS, Box 8407, San Jose CA 95155.

One special Fantrips listing is free, subject to our editing. Send full info to Rail Travel News, Fantrips Dept, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

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Ride Durham Line of Norfolk and Western on Thursday September 1 to Lynchburg. Stops at Roxboro, South Boston and Brookneal--Steam Power. Write RNRH, PO Box 13222, Roanoke VA 24032 or call (703) 366-5211 6 to 10p.m. E.D.T.

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RAIL FANS ONLY! It's easy to secure your AMTRAK & CN reservations and tickets (or USA Rail Pass)--from anywhere in the world. Tickets by mail from GREAT WESTERN TOURS, 639 Market St., San Francisco 94105, or call (415) 398-2994.

TIMETABLES - Selling "Best of 60's" Ten System TTs - $10. SSAE for new list quarterly. Carl Loucks, 199 Wayland, Hamden CT 06518.

DINING CAR DISHES, glasses, silver, cloth. Timetables, guides, Pullman, stationery, rules, metal items from 25 railroads. Long stamped envelope for list. J. McClellan, 1752 S. Wichita, Wichita, Kan. 67213. (Will buy large and small railroad collections.)

Bound for Niagara Falls & 6060 STEAM? Ride then shop at The IRON HORSE Gifts & Souvenirs in the restored CN Depot. Mention this ad for a 10% DISCOUNT.

GOING EURAIL? Take a worldwide THOMAS COOK INTERNATIONAL TIMETABLE, $7.50 bulk mail ($9.50 air) from Thomas Cook Ltd, P.O. Box 36, Peterborough, England.

YOU'RE INVITED--MEXICO RAILFAN FUN-TRAIN--JAN 20 to Feb 5, 1978--Trip of Thousand Wonders, Mexico City, Merida (narrow gauge), Cancun, Uxmal, Metro, street cars, locomotive ride. Trip starts in Oklahoma (join anywhere). MIDWEST TRAVEL SERVICE, 2936R Bella Vista, Midwest City, OK 73110--Phone 405-732-0566.

Will send 3 good N&W or Sou diesel color slides my choice for each good private or business car color slide. Will return any not wanted. O. H. Borsum, 426 Woodland Circle, Lynchburg, VA 24502.

History of C&O's GEORGE WASHINGTON...Complete story of this train told and illustrated in May 1977 C&O Historical Newsletter (34pp total) $2.00 per copy. Consider joining C&O Historical Society; much treatment & illustration of C&O passenger operations & AMTRAK. $7.50/year. C&O Historical Society, Inc., P.O. Box 417, Alderson WV 24910.

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